



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Farm Service Agency

Fact Sheet

April 2007

2007 County Committee Election

Montana State Producer Handbook



Overview

The election of agricultural producers to Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to ALL farmers and ranchers with large or small operations. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Committee members are a critical component of the operations of FSA. They help deliver FSA farm programs at the local level. Farmers and ranchers who serve on committees help with the decisions necessary to administer the programs in their counties. They work to make FSA agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers.

Committees provide local input on:

- Commodity price support loans and payments;
- Conservation programs;
- Set rates and yields for the local area;
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities; and
- Emergency programs.

FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws. Committee members apply their knowledge of local resource needs to make local decisions.

2007 Election Period

June 15, 2007 – Nomination period begins. Request nomination forms from the local FSA office or logon to the Montana FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt> under the "Hot Links" section.

August 1, 2007 – Last day to file nomination forms at the local FSA office.

November 2, 2007 – Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters.

December 3, 2007 – Last day to return voted ballots to the local FSA office.

January 1, 2008 – Newly elected committee members take office.

Nominations

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign nomination form FSA-669A. This may be found on the Montana FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt> under the "Hot Links" section. The form includes a statement that the nominee agrees to serve if elected.

Nomination forms for the 2007 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by close of business on August 1, 2007.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the committee. Individuals may nominate

themselves or others as a candidate. Additionally, organizations representing minority and women farmers or ranchers may nominate candidates.

Who Can Vote

Agricultural producers of legal voting age can vote if they participate or cooperate in any FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm can also vote. More information about voting eligibility requirements can be found by logging on to the Montana FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt> under the "Hot Links" section or by contacting the local FSA office.

Don't Miss Out on Voting – Make your voice be heard

Ballots will be mailed to voters by November 2, 2007, and must be returned to the local FSA office or postmarked by December 3, 2007. Eligible voters may contact their local FSA office before the final date to return ballots if they do not receive a ballot.

Uniform Guidelines

USDA has issued uniform guidelines for county committee elections to help ensure that FSA county committees fairly represent the agricultural producers of a county or multi-county area, especially minority and women producers. USDA has defined minority persons as African

Americans, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Hispanics, Asians, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders. FSA encourages participation in the county committee election by minorities and women.

The following guidelines are now in effect:

- If no valid nominations are filed, the secretary of agriculture may nominate up to two individuals to be placed on the ballot.
- County committees must annually review local administrative area (LAA) boundaries to ensure the fair representation of minority and women producers in their county or multi-county jurisdiction.
- FSA county offices shall actively locate and recruit eligible candidates identified as minority and women farmers and ranchers as potential nominees for the county committee elections using any reasonable means necessary, including the development of partnerships with community based organizations.

Role of Advisors

In addition to elected members, FSA county committees may also include advisors. Advisors are appointed to county committees in counties or multi-county areas that have significant numbers of minority or women producers and lack such members on FSA county

committees. Advisors play an important role by providing diverse viewpoints and by representing the interests of minorities and women in decisions made by county committees.

For Additional Information

Additional information may be obtained at local FSA offices or through the Montana FSA Web site at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt

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